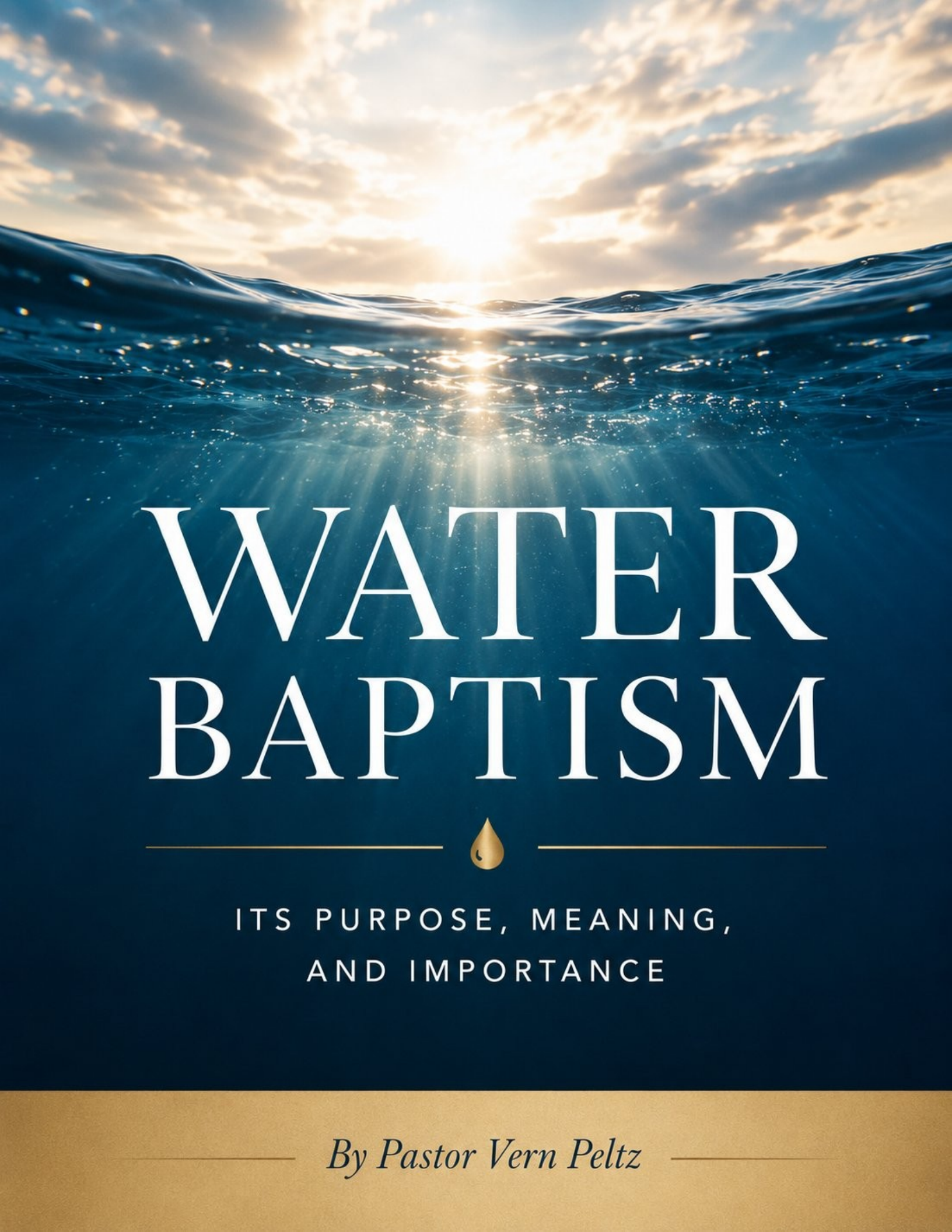




WATER BAPTISM



ITS PURPOSE, MEANING,
AND IMPORTANCE

By Pastor Vern Peltz

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Water Baptism is a very important experience which is to take place in a person's life after Salvation — that is, being Born Again. The following information has been compiled to help you better understand what Water Baptism is all about. This is by no means a complete exposition on the subject; however, it should give enough information to make Water Baptism more understandable.

1. Does Anything Need to Precede Water Baptism?

In John 3, Jesus tells us what is needed to get to heaven. In verse 3, He says we must be “Born-Again.” Another way of saying this is: we need to start a new life by Believing In and Putting Our Trust in Jesus as our Savior, and start living for Him. The reason we need to believe in Christ and accept Him as our Savior is because without God's help, the human being is condemned for eternity. (In the Greek, the word “Believe” means to *Trust in, Adhere to, Rely on* — we need to put our life completely into His care.)

All humans have sinned and therefore must pay for that sin. The Good News is that Jesus already paid for our sin. (Rom. 3-4) If we'll just accept what He's done for us, Trusting In and Relying Upon Him for our salvation — we'll have all our sins Forgiven and Paid for. The only other option is condemnation. It comes upon us because we didn't accept, or believe in the only One who can pay for our sin. (John 3:16-18)

Receiving this salvation is an easy thing. The Bible says:

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:8-9

As well as:

If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

Rom. 10:9-10

I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

Acts 20:21

Getting saved is as easy as Confessing to God the fact that you have sinned. Simply Own It. Then Believe in the Supernatural fact that Jesus rose from the dead. Say it with your mouth that you are making Jesus your “Lord”. (The word Lord means that He is now your Owner, Master, Possessor, Controller. Submit yourself to Him as a Servant.) Now simply follow through on that decision in your everyday life. Instead of doing your own thing, find out what God wants and start doing His will.

Water Baptism is part of stopping doing what WE want, and starting to do what HE wants (this is also known as “Repentance”). For a person to live for God and mature spiritually, they need to repent of their sin. What is repentance? The Greek words “Metaneo” and “Metanoia” have been translated into the English language as the word “Repentance”. It means to “have a change of mind, or have another mind.” When a person repents of their sin, they are literally having a change of mind about the life they were living. They are changing their life’s direction to follow after Jesus. (Rom. 6:1-14) That’s why it’s called being “Born-Again”. It’s like a new start in life.

To Be Baptized in water before being born-again is of NO value. As you come to understand the purpose of water baptism, you will see why it only has value once we are Born-Again. That is why the scripture does not teach infant baptism. Scripturally, infant baptism is of no use spiritually.

Water baptism does not give us our salvation. We are saved — born-again — by FAITH. (Rom. 3-4, Gal. 3) Yet, there are some very good reasons for being baptized in water — we’ll talk about that a little later. The main thing to remember right now is that we need to be born-again before we are baptized in water. That is the only way that the baptism will do us any good. (Matt. 3:1-2, 5-6; Acts 2:38, 3:19, 8:36-38, 19:3-5)

New Testament scriptures for salvation put the emphasis on: Faith, Confession, Acceptance, and Repentance. (John 1:12; Rom. 3; Gal. 3; Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 10:9-10; 1 John 1:9; Rev. 3:20; Luke 5:20, 7:47-50, 23:42-43) We are Saved — Born-Again — by Faith through Grace, not by water baptism. However, it does play a very important role in a Christian’s life.

2. Why Should I Be Baptized in Water?

One reason is that we are commanded to (Matt. 28:19, Acts 2:38, 10:47-48 — that should be enough reason in itself).

But scripture does go on and give us some other reasons.

- (1)** Because of the awesome work that Jesus does in us via the baptism. When you accepted Jesus into your life, spiritually you were born-again. Your old life of sin died and was replaced by a new life. (2 Cor. 5:17, Rom. 6-8) As we are baptized in water, we are positionally and literally burying the old life of sin under the water, and as we come out of the water, we are rising to the new life we will live in Christ. (Rom. 6:1-14)

You see, God doesn’t want us to live in bondage to our old life of sin, but He wants us Free to live our life for Him. Water Baptism plays an important part in helping us get free from sin (sin is simply doing what we want and not what God wants) so that we can live a life of righteousness (which is simply living our life so that it pleases God). (Rom. 6:1-14, 8:1-16; Gal. 2:20, 5:24 — Amplified Version; Col. 3:3, 5; Eph. 4:22-32; 1 Pet. 2:24)

- (2)** There is a work that happens under the water that helps us get rid of the things in our old nature/flesh that keep trying to stop us from doing what’s

right. During the baptism, the Bible says that Jesus literally reaches down into the water and cuts away/circumcises the power of the sinful nature out of our life. (Col. 2:11-12) If we will accept this work by faith, it is such a complete work, that in Col. 2:20 Paul asks — since it is a done deal, why do we go on living under the power of the flesh? Paul's whole point is that we don't have to be controlled by man-made rules, or the old nature any longer. There is a tremendous freedom from sin that can be ours via water baptism.

3. How Should I Be Baptized?

There are many different ways to be baptized in various churches today. However, the scriptural way is to be baptized by immersion. The scriptural examples are all definitely by immersion. (Matt. 3:6; Mark 1:9-10; Acts 8:38)

In Rom. 6, the scripture is talking about water baptism. In verse 4 it speaks of a person being buried (in water), and then being resurrected (from the water). As you read the entire section, you'll see the burial is referring to us dying to and burying our old life. The resurrection refers to the new life that we will be living for Christ. So in essence, it is saying that we died to the old life, were buried, and as we are coming out of the water we are being resurrected from the dead to live a new life. Water Baptism is a physical picture of what happened to us when we put our trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins. That's why Jesus referred to it as being "Born-Again". (John 3:3)

When something is buried (as it says in Rom. 6), it is completely covered with whatever it is being buried under. (Ground, water, etc.) When the Bible speaks of Burial in Baptism, it is referring to being COMPLETELY COVERED AND ENVELOPED with and in water.

The Greek word "Baptizo" has been translated into the English language as Baptize. The word "Baptizo" means "To Dip, Immerse, or Plunge Into or Under Some Type of Liquid." There is no other word for "Baptize" in the New Testament.

There is no evidence of "Sprinkling" ever being used as a form of water baptism in the Bible. The picture of sprinkling contradicts everything that the Bible is trying to teach about water baptism. Considering the reasons mentioned above, the scriptural method of baptism would have to be by immersion.

4. When Should I Be Baptized?

For water baptism to do what it was intended to do, a person should be baptized after they are born-again. (See point 1) Once an individual is born-again, and has a good understanding of what it is all about, then it is time to be baptized.

Remember: Water Baptism is a physical process which represents what has already happened in us spiritually — our dying to the old life, and being born-again so that we can live a new life for Christ.

It is also part of a process that includes the renunciation of our past life and the power of sin which controlled us. In fact, Colossians makes it clear that a literal cutting away/circumcision of our old nature takes place during water baptism.

These are all different works that happen once we're saved. None of them can happen until we're living for Jesus.

5. Can I Be Baptized More Than Once?

This question comes up quite often. Many people have been baptized by sprinkling, or simply did not know what water baptism was really for. So they couldn't set their faith on the things that God wants to happen in them, when they were baptized the first time. So is it OK to do it again? Yes. In scripture we find people who were baptized in water more than once. (Acts 19:1-7)

6. Is There a Difference Between Baptism unto Repentance and Baptism into Christ?

This is an interesting question that comes up from time to time. When we talk about "Baptism unto Repentance" we are referring to the time when John the Baptist was baptizing. When we refer to being "Baptized into Christ", we're talking about the focus of baptism after Jesus' death and resurrection.

The difference is simply the focus. John's baptism was focused on ONLY repentance. (Matt. 3:1-2, 11; Acts 19:1-7) Being baptized into Christ does not only focus on the aspect of repentance, but it goes much, much farther. It also focuses on the POWER and ABILITY to live a new life. (Rom. 6)

To say it another way, John's baptism focused on dying to sin — baptism into Christ focuses on dying to sin, but also RESURRECTING and LIVING a NEW LIFE FOR GOD.

7. What Is the Process of Being Baptized?

- 1.** It starts with being Born-Again. Without this, baptism is of no value.
- 2.** To receive the full benefit of baptism, you need to know what it's supposed to accomplish, so you can set your faith toward receiving what it's supposed to do in you.
- 3.** When we do the baptism, we find a place where we can submerge you in water. We've baptized in lakes, bathtubs, hot tubs, swimming pools, water tanks, baptisms, etc. The emphasis is not on the thing that holds the water, the emphasis is on getting submerged in water.
- 4.** We ask that you wear clothes that can get wet and it won't ruin them. (Definitely don't be all dressed up) You can wear pants, shorts, with a dark colored shirt. (Please, no dresses as they tend to float up in the water. And, no white/light colored blouses — since when they get wet you can see through them.)

5. Bring a towel and a change of clothes so you can dry off after the baptism.
6. Water Baptism is a very spiritual thing. We approach it as a holy event. Once you are in the water, we will pray and wait on God for any direction He may give. Often there are specific things He would like to have prayed over the person. Regularly, there are prophecies, or personal words spoken over the person. Dealing with the flesh/old nature is a huge thing in a person's life. This is a very powerful, spiritual work that takes place.
7. When it is time for the actual baptism (dunking under the water), we will talk you through each step of what is going to happen and what you are to do. (Take a deep breath, hold your nose shut, etc.) Sometimes, we dunk people multiple times, because we feel that is what the Spirit is saying to do. If that is the case, we'll let you know what to expect.
8. We baptize in the name of the Father, Son (Jesus Christ), and Holy Spirit. (Matt. 28:19; Acts 8:16, 10:48) So we make that pronouncement over each person before dunking them.
9. Since this is such a huge work that Jesus is doing, expect other things to take place. Often people are healed, delivered of habits and/or evil spirits, baptized in the Holy Spirit, set free from bondages, have visions, etc.
10. When the baptism is done, you are free to change clothes. You don't have to wait around for the rest to be baptized before you can change your clothes.

8. What Should I Expect After Being Baptized?

Water Baptism isn't a shortcut to spiritual growth. It will not fix everything in your life. There will still be a need for you to discipline yourself and grow.

What water baptism does do is cut out the power of the old nature. (That overwhelming drive and control in your flesh that is capable of forcing you to do something that is wrong.) Once you're baptized, **YOU WILL HAVE THE ABILITY TO CHOOSE AND SAY NO TO SIN. IT WILL NOW BE YOUR CHOICE.** (Rom. 6-8)

Will you still be tempted? Yes. (Jesus — Matt. 26:36-46)

Will the temptation still be strong at times? Yes. (Jesus — Heb. 12:4)

Will you still need to grow, mature, and overcome as a Christian? Yes. (Ephesian church — Acts 19:1-7; Eph. 4:1-6:9)

Will you still need to engage in spiritual warfare? Yes. (Ephesian church — Eph. 6:10-18)

However, the difference is that now the old nature/flesh is stripped of its ability to control you. (Rom. 6) **NOW YOU CAN CONTROL IT.** (Rom. 8) **NOW** there is nothing that can keep you from **WINNING** over your old nature. (2 Cor. 1:18-22, 2:14-16)

What approach do we take in our minds and attitudes? Rom. 6 gives us a step-by-step answer to that.

6:1-2 We are not to go on sinning. We're dead to sin.

- 6:3-5** The explanation of the picture of water baptism.
- 6:6-7** Our body of sin has been rendered powerless. We are not a slave to sin or our body any longer.
- 6:8-10** Jesus set the example by dying to sin and subsequently living for God.
- 6:11-14** In the same way consider yourself dead to sin. Do Not let it live or reign in you. Do Not Obey It. Do Not offer yourself to it. OFFER YOURSELF TO GOD.
- (The way to do this: Rom. 8:1-17; 2 Cor. 10:3-6)
- Sin cannot master you because you are not under law, but under grace.*
- 6:15-16** Just because we're under grace, that does not give us the right or the excuse to sin. If we offer ourselves to sin, even as Christians we will become slaves to it again.
- 6:17-18** When we WHOLE-HEARTEDLY obey and submit ourselves to God, we are set free from sin and become slaves/servants to God/righteousness.
- 6:19-22** The same way we used to offer ourselves and give in to sin, now do that with righteousness. The same way our offering ourselves to sin brought death into our lives, now by offering ourselves to God and righteousness — EXPECT Holiness and Life.
- 6:23** The promise of that is built on this principle. Sin will kill us and bring us death, but by offering ourselves to God, we receive a gift that will bring life to us.

EXPECT THAT!!! LAY HOLD OF IT BY FAITH!!!

CONCLUSION

Water Baptism is not a ritual or tradition that is to be observed just because it is a nice thing to do. There are very definite reasons to be baptized in water. For a person to be free from those overpowering areas of sin in their life so they can grow in their spiritual life the way they ought to — every born-again believer should be baptized in water.

NOTES